

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

6/22/83

Conference

From page one

business community should seriously consider playing a more active role in helping to make our schools more effective."

Bell said "the American education enterprise system is in trouble." Among the concerns he cited were:

- Military services having to rewrite their technical manuals to an 8th grade level and even to 6th grade standards.

- American businesses having to spend billions each year educating, training and retraining high school and college graduates.

- American colleges and universities offering remedial courses.

- Some 23 million functional illiterates in the nation.

Using the conference on productivity as a forum to promote the administration's education policies, Bell said President Ronald Reagan is studying proposals for improving the nation's education system that could be accomplished without increased federal funding.

Many of the improvements were recommended in April by the National Commission on Educational Excellence and have since been embraced by Reagan. They include enhanced competency requirements, merit pay for teachers, restoration of compulsory courses and fewer non-academic electives.

Bell said American productivity in manufacturing is much too low and has been for nearly a decade. For example, he said from 1973-81, productivity grew at an annual rate of 1.5 percent as against an average annual growth rate of 3 percent from 1960-73. More recently, from 1981 to 1982, the growth rate actually reversed itself to a minus 1 per cent, he said.

Bell said the nation was moving into a new economic era, in which high technology was revolutionizing industries, renewing the economy and

promising new hope.

"A high quality education is the bedrock, the essential foundation upon which this new economic era will be constructed," he said.

Another conference speaker, economist Murray L. Weidenbaum, said that providing incentives for both teachers and students is the best way to make the government's education dollars bring better results.

Weidenbaum — who was chief economic adviser to President Ronald Reagan before returning to his job as director of Washington University's Center for the Study of American Business — noted that while federal spending on education had nearly triple since 1974, test scores had dropped.

"Clearly, just spending more money on education is not sufficient," he said in remarks prepared for the conference today. "This is not a justification to spend less on our schools. Rather, experience underscores the need to improve the effectiveness with which the funds are used."

He said salary incentives should be used to help ease the shortage of math and science teachers, despite protests from teachers in other fields.

"Income is not a matter of inherent nobility," he said. "Indeed, it is a matter of attracting people to the area of work in which they are needed. If college and universities paid science teachers and classics teachers the same, we would have a chronic shortage of physicists and a surplus of Latin professors."

"The prospect of higher pay is an important factor encouraging more students to major in physics and math. Standard across-the-board pay increases for teachers may seem to make the administrator's job easier. But that only worsens the shortage situation."

Incentives for students should

promotion and graduation, Weidenbaum said.

"For many if not most of us, studying is hard work. Why do it if you get promoted and graduate whether you apply yourself or not?"

He recalled seeing a question on Florida's new statewide test required for a high school diploma — a test that has drawn criticism from students and others in the state. The question asked how long a person had been in a room if he entered when the clock showed 1:50 and left when it showed 2:10.

"To those who criticize such basic attempts at performance testing," Weidenbaum said, "I must reply: How can we expect a young new worker to get to the job on time if he or she cannot even tell time? How can they even get the job if they cannot fill out the application form?"

"The links between education and incentives and productivity are very